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ABSTRACT

The position paper of the Grand Island, Nebraska, schools supports the assumption that when a pupil's handicap affects his ability to learn and perform, appropriate special education should include guidelines for special grading. The paper identifies grading obstacles such as differing perceptions of various participants in the grading process. Three grading philosophies (criterion-referenced, self-referenced, and norm-referenced) are explained. General grading practices (e.g., use of a multiple grading system to serve diverse functions) are recommended. Also noted are grading practices for handicapped and remedial students grouped into categories based on standards, grading vehicles, or logistics. Elements of the grading process supported by this paper include performance criteria, the grading decision, and reporting systems. Physical, cognitive, emotional, and sensory handicapping factors are described as they relate to grading practices. Problems that regular educators have with adjusting grading practices for handicapped pupils are noted. Ten grading policy recommendations include grading by the subject teacher, designation of "alternative assignment" when adaptive grading is applied, reporting to parents in the form of a written progress report as well as a standard grade, and failure only in extreme and well-documented cases. Questions to help a teacher determine whether alternative grading is necessary for a mainstreamed student are offered. A sample matrix of grading messages and receivers, a grading contract, a multicategory system of grading mainstreamed handicapped students, and a three-page reference list conclude the document. (DB)

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POSITION PAPER:
GRADING MAINSTREAMED HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

CNSSP
Central Nebraska
Support Service Programs

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POSITION PAPER:
GRADING MAINSTREAMED HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

CENTRAL NEBRASKA SUPPORT SERVICE PROGRAMS
A three county special education cooperative

Robert D. Shanka Jr.
Editor

Grand Island Nebraska Public Schools
615 North Elm
Grand Island, NE 68801

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POSITION PAPER:
GRADING MAINSTREAMED HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to support the position that when a pupil's handicap does affect the ability to learn and perform, appropriate special education should include guidelines for special grading. Regular classroom teachers are not in a position to undertake major structural changes in the existing grading system, they <u>are</u> in a position to make minor structural changes in their own classrooms. Such changes, at the classroom level, can improve the educational prospects for handicapped students and reduce the frustrations teachers and students may feel concerning grades. This paper will review grading issues, philosophies, and include specific recommendations for grading mainstreamed handicapped students. Also included in this paper will be a sample individualized grading policy. A brief synthesis of available literature concerning the wide range of viewpoints regarding grading practices for general education students and for handicapped and remedial pupils is discussed.

GRADING OBSTACLES

Teachers need to find a compromise between uniformity and individualization. Not everything needs to be individualized for every student or even for every mainstreamed student. The real issues of time, numbers, curriculum, and evaluation seem to confound effective mainstreaming. Regular classroom teachers must assess and reassess these issues in their own classrooms and consult with special education personnel for assistance in individualization of instruction and grading as is appropriate utilizing the Individual Educational Plan (IEP). The IEP can serve as the vehicle for appropriate individualization and grading. However, the IEP is not as effectively used as it could be for many mainstreamed special education students. Ineffective use of the IEP is an obstacle to efficient use of grades as an evaluative tool.

Another major obstacle to clear, accurate, and fair grading is poor communication. The message intended by the person assigning a grade may not be the message received by the grade consumer or consumers. An educator assigning a grade might have any one of at least four common grading purposes. A favorable grade could mean that the student (a) demonstrated competence, (b) made progress, (c) exerted effort, and/or (d) compared favorably with others. The several grade consumers that interpret grades are; students, parents, teachers, other school personnel, and postsecondary institutions and employers. Each of these grade consumers can interpret grades differently in light of their needs. It is possible than more than one consumer may interpret the same grade differently. Grades are intended to communicate messages. If the message intended is not the message received, accurate communication fails (Carpenter, 1985).

A related major obstacle to clear, accurate, and fair grading concerns the different perceptions of participants in the grading process. Some information about the perceptions of grading participants is

available. There is some evidence that when teachers grade they are influenced by factors other than present performance, such as: handicapping lables (Foster, Vaseldyke, & Reese, 1975); sex (Caldwell & Harnett, 1967; Carter, 1952; Edmiston, 1943; Schmuck & Van Egmond, 1965); and past performance (Gibb, 1983). Are grade consumers aware of these sources of bias? What are their perceptions of the meaning of grades? Pupils expect grades to indicate their performance but are aware of inconsistencies in the grading process (Hull, 1980). Consumers' perceptions of grading fairness are related to their success in the grading system (Bippus, 1981); Hull, 1980). The grades received in a class have been shown to be related to future student performance in that class (Yarborough & Johnson, 1980).

Although parents and others, including postsecondary institutions and future employers, may be aware of possible sources of grading bias, they are nevertheless dependent upon grades as a major indication of progress (Cassidy, 1977) and as a predictor of future performance (Bippus, 1981); Chandler, 1983; Middleton, 1982; Olsen, 1983). These different perceptions hinder the communication of a common message. Those who assign grades may intend several purposes and those who read grades may interpret several messages. The possibility of a failure to communicate clearly, accurately, and fairly in the grading process is greater than desirable (Carpenter, 1985).

Grading Philosophies

A critical factor in the grading process is the philosophical viewpoints of the individuals who assign grades and to a lesser extent, the viewpoints of those who are graded and those who read and use grades. Grading philosophy is as important an influence as past performance, sex, and handicap because one's basic philosophy will determine what kind of grade will be used to communicate to the grade consumers.

Terwilliger (1977) has provided a review of three common grading philosophies, (criterion-referenced, self-referenced, & norm-referenced). He carefully describes the assumptions of each as well as practices consistent with each philosophical viewpoint.

Criterion-referenced Notion One way of stating this viewpoint is to say that it is behaviorist and associated with B.F. Skinner and Benjamin Bloom. This philosophy is based on the assumption that grades should reflect attainment of minimum objectives specified and stated in advance. Grades reflecting individual differences or comparison to others are meaningless. Students are allowed unlimited time to achieve objectives, and grades reflect whether a stated objective has been mastered at that point in time. Grades are not intended to reflect progress, effort, or even relative quality. They are meant to indicate attainment of minimal standards. Competence is the major intended message of this philosophy.

Self-referenced Notion This viewpoint, Terwilliger (1977) states, is the approach of humanists associated with Ivan Illich, Johnothan Kozol, and A. S. Neill. Advocates of a humanist approach to education regard grades as antithetical to the promotion of learning and self dignity and, when forced to grade, base their judgment on the amount

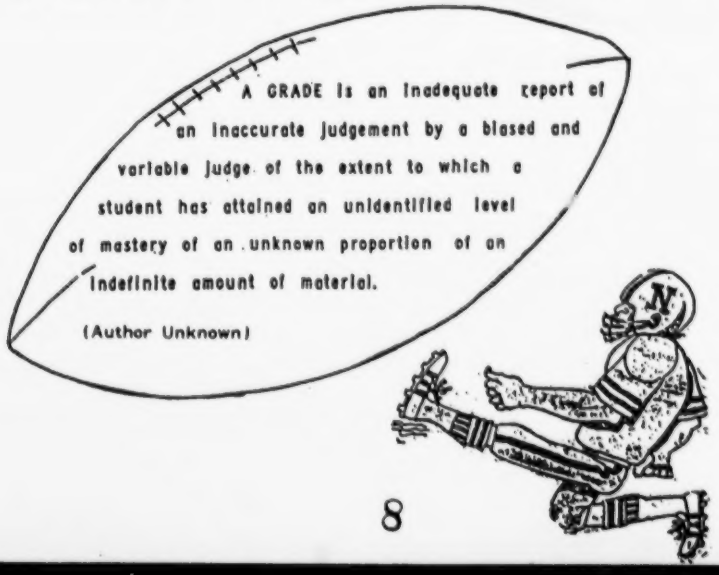
of growth demonstrated by the student or the student's progress as compared to some perception of the student's ability or aptitude. This viewpoint is consistent with the progressive philosophy mentioned by Olsen (1983) which regards grading as an obstruction to meaningful, on-going feedback and a demeaning substitute for intrinsic reward. Grades reflect growth in a particular area and not competency or quality. This growth indicator may be linked to effort in addition to perceived ability. Progress is the major intended message of this philosophy, while effort may be a minor one.

Norm-referenced Notion Individuals who adopt this viewpoint are pragmatists and tend to have traditional or conventional beliefs about grading, including the assumption that education should help pupils gauge their strengths and weaknesses in relation to others. Differences in measured achievement provide the basis for grades. This viewpoint conforms to Olsen's traditional philosophy (1983), based on Lindeman's (1967) assumptions: (1) educational systems are supposed to cause desired changes in student behavior, (2) instruction is supposed to support that goal, and (3) this would not be possible without assessing instruction by measuring changes in students' behavior. Although this philosophy is traditional, it may not be as clearly articulated as the criterion-referenced and self-referenced viewpoints. Most interpretations of this philosophy regard grades as indicators of performance relative to others as well as level of competence. Comparison with others is the major message of this philosophy, with competence implied.

General Grading Practices

When examining grading practices, one should review suggestions from general practice. The more interested reader should review the work of Ebel (1972), Frierson (1975), Gronlund (1974), (1981), Kirschenbaum, Napier, and Simon (1971), Kohl (1982), Terwilliger (1971, 1977), and Carpenter, (1985) for a more thorough analysis of general grading theory and practice. A brief summary from this literature follows:

1. A multiple grading system should be employed which will serve the various instructional, informational, guidance, and administrative functions. One method may be needed to document competency such as a mastery checklist or pass-fail. Another method, such as letter grades, may be appropriate to indicate relative standing.


A GRADE is an inadequate report of
an inaccurate judgement by a biased and
variable judge of the extent to which a
student has attained an unidentified level
of mastery of an unknown proportion of an
indefinite amount of material.
(Author Unknown)

2. A multi-category system which uses both criterion-referenced and norm-referenced methods is superior to either one alone or a self-referenced method. The authors cited above favor grading systems which indicate mastery and relative standing rather than progress based on ability. This suggestion differs from the recommendations regarding individual remedial pupils.

3. Objectives should be clearly stated in advance if a criterion-referenced method is used. This method is best for pass-fail, mastery learning grading. Special educators may interpret this as an affirmation of the practice of grading using IEP objectives.

4. Grades should be based on valid measurements of performance and not an attempt to indicate attitude, effort, or conduct. This suggestion does not contradict the special education literature directly but does conflict with the opinions of some special educators (Carpenter & Grantham, 1983).

5. Grades should be brief but informative and should encourage two-way communication. This recommendation reinforces the importances of clear communication by inviting dialogue without placing a tremendous burden on teachers to write essays concerning each pupil's performance.

Grading Handicapped and Remedial Students

Fortunately, suggestions for alleviating problems associated with grading handicapped and remedial pupils have begun to appear (Aloia, 1983; Cohen, 1983; Drucker & Hansen, 1982; Frierson, 1975; Lieberman, 1982; Lindsey, Burns & Guthrie, 1984; Mosier & Park, 1979; Turnbull & Schulz, 1979; Turnbull, Strickland & Brantley, 1982; Wiederholt, Hammill & Brown, 1978; Zoboroski, 1981). The grading literature concerning individual learners, including handicapped and remedial pupils, differs in some ways from the literature regarding general practice. The suggestions which are presented in Table 1 appear to be practical, although some suggestions contradict others. For example, some advocate a pass-fail system (Lieberman, 1982), some advocate eliminating failing grades particularly where mastery learning is applied (Frierson, 1975; Gronlund, 1981; Kirschenbaum et al., 1971). Some researchers advocate a wider range of grades such as As, Bs, Cs, Ds, and Fs.

The suggestions are grouped into three categories. Standards concerns the basis for grades without the benefit of message clarity in some instances. For example, if one uses lowered grading standards, it is not clear what a grade would convey. Vehicles concerns the grade or marking medium used such as pass-fail, intrinsic-extrinsic, symbol-narrative. Logistics deals with participants, frequency, and style.

Suggestions regarding standards in the literature advocate basing grades on progress and ability. The authors of these suggestions embrace the idea of individualizing grades according to curriculum modified especially for each particular student and reflecting completion of personal goal-oriented tasks. Factors such as the

difficulty of assignments and recent past performance are also considered important in determining grades.

A wide range of grading methods or vehicles is suggested in the literature reflecting the humanistic, individual attitude promoted by most of the authors. While some favor written narratives in place of traditional marks, others favor checks indicating mastery of pass-fail systems. Less traditional token economies are suggested without clear recommendations regarding how they translate into reporting systems. The more traditional number and letter grade systems are also recommended. With at least one notable exception (Lindsey, Burns & Guthrie, 1984), the authors of these suggestions do not seem to distinguish between handicapped pupils in special classes and those in regular classes.

Logistical strategies have also been recommended regarding the implementation of individual grading systems, particularly with mainstreamed handicapped students. These include involving students, other teachers, and parents in grading; writing the grading plan in the IEP; and grading frequently.

To summarize, grading suggestions related to individual learners in the available literature generally advocate grading according to individual ability, using a variety of marking systems to aid in clear communication. All participants in the grading process should be involved.

Classroom teachers are concerned because their school districts do not have specific policies for grading the mainstreamed student in their classes. The question of grading the mainstreamed student cannot be answered solely by the regular education teacher. The answer to this question requires input from school administrators and special educators as well. To effectively grade mainstreamed handicapped students, consideration must be given to the impact of a student's handicapping factors (explained below) in relationship to the elements of the grading process. Emphasis should be placed on the need for administrators and all teachers to understand the interrelationship of all these variables in the grading process. Butler, Magliocca, Torres & Lee, (1984) describe the following grading process elements.

<u>Grading Process Elements</u>

Measurement: use of a variety of methods to measure student progress, including written test/work, reports, classroom projects, and homework assignments.

Performance Criteria: interpretation of information obtained from administration of measuring devices; the framework of the scoring interpretation process based on a set of standards used to determine skill mastery; raw score, criterion-referenced, norm-referenced.

Grading Decision: to some degree influenced by teacher's subjective judgment of student's effort, work habits, attitude and achievement.

Grading Symbols: use of letters or numbers to indicate student achievement, progress, or effort as a range of grades A to F or 1 through 5.

Reporting Systems: method used to communicate student progress/achievement using report cards, interim progress reports and checklists of competencies.

Handicapping Factors

Generally, a student's inability to comply with established performance criteria, for grading purposes, can be attributed to one or more of the following limitations over which the pupil may have little or no control. These factors are physical, cognitive, emotional, and sensory as described by Butler, Magliocca, Torres, & Lee (1984).

Physical: condition affecting motor coordination. Student characteristics may include; limited ability to manipulate pen/pencil; require use of typewriter or assistive communication device; require additional time to complete written assignments; poor penmanship.

Cognitive: condition affecting receptive and/or expressive communication skills. Student characteristics may include: difficulty comprehending verbal and/or written instructions; difficulty eliciting verbal and/or written responses; poor abstract reasoning skills; limited ability-making generalizations; short attention span.

Emotional: condition affecting behavioral/social skills. Student characteristics may include: difficulty following verbal and/or written instructions; short attention span; easily distracted by others or external environmental stimulation.

Sensory: condition affecting visual or auditory reception and/or expression. Student characteristics may include: limited auditory perception/discrimination; require use of lip reading, sign language, or assistive communication device; difficulty eliciting verbal responses; difficulty with reading printed materials.

The Decision Making Model For Modification in Table 2 incorporates the individual differences or factors that may require modification of the grading or reporting system and the process elements. Listed along

with the elements of the grading process and the individual student differences is the modifications for regular teachers, special education teachers, and administrators.

There is clearly a wide range of opinions on grading. Furthermore, mainstreamed handicapped pupils in secondary schools present special grading problems (Carpenter et al., 1983, Vasa, 1982). These special problems deserve specialized attention and practices. When a pupil's handicap does affect the ability to learn and perform, appropriate special education should include special grading. Adjustments are needed (see Tables 2 & 3).

Problems With Grading Adjustments

Regular educators sometimes resist adjusting grading practices for handicapped pupils. Some regular educators insist that special educators award a disproportionate share of high grades. Regular educators consider this unfair. Carpenter (1985) has encountered regular educators who have had extreme special grading policies for handicapped pupils. One such teacher stated that handicapped students could earn no better than a C in a particular classroom. When pressed for a reason, the teacher replied, "They are handicapped. How could they do better?"

Drucker and Hansen (1982) have suggested that the reasons regular classroom teachers have failed to adapt their grading methods can be grouped into three categories: (1) They fear that adjustments will prohibit maintenance of standards; (2) they resist deviating from established policy; and (3) they maintain that adjustments would be unfair to nonhandicapped pupils.

Regular educators (and special educators) are not being urged to defy good, fair teaching practices. Rather they are being urged not to discriminate unfairly against handicapped pupils in grading matters. When a handicap does interfere, educators should provide appropriate adaptations and should report progress fairly and objectively. Grading systems should have common goals. Grading processes should communicate intended messages clearly and accurately and they should serve educational purposes. To achieve these goals, educators must realize how desirable and essential adjustment in grading methods can be for handicapped students. All educators must guard against severely lowered expectations that can result when a student is labeled handicapped. Handicapped students can learn and must be treated objectively and fairly in the adjusted grading process.

Grading Policy Recommendations

The school or system should adopt a reasonable policy concerning assigning grades to handicapped pupils. Drucker and Hansen (1982) have suggested an appropriate individualized grading policy: (p. 251)

> "It should be the policy of this school to employ differential standards for grading and course requirements when necessary. The regular classroom teacher is encouraged to modify the curriculum, instructional approaches, and grading practices for those identified as handicapped students in the regular classroom."

Other policy recommendations (Kiraly & Bedell, 1984; Carpenter, 1985) for generic grading consideration concerning handicapped students in the mainstream are as follows and modified to assist Central Nebraska Support Services (CNSSP) member schools.

The school performance of mainstreamed special education students will be:

1. Evaluated and graded by the teacher responsible for teaching the course of instruction or subject level. The same report card used for regular students should be used for mainstreamed handicapped students whenever possible.

2. Designated "alternative assignment," as necessaary, by the teacher who applies adaptive techniques for the student.

3. Recorded as a standard grade followed by "graded on reduced requirements," when necessary, by the teacher who has adapted the course of instruction to establish a minimum level of achievement.

4. Measured <u>frequently</u> and adaptively by quizzes, tests, exams, or other performance criteria based on objectives (such as those found in IEPs), goal setting, and contracting which should maximize the achievement of desired educational goals.

5. Judged as worthy of passing, <u>except in extreme instances</u>, and only after the parents and the special education staff have been notified verbally and in writing. Complete and through documentation with specific reasons and examples must be reported and compiled.

6. Recorded with a grade for the alternate assignments or reduced requirements, when necessary, and with a class equivalent grade. The adjusted grade and the class equivalent grade will be recorded in the student's IEP when necessary.

7. Reported regularly to the special education teacher assigned to the student. Reporting will adhere to the school's formal reporting procedures and schedule. Any other informal reporting may be arranged at the discretion of the special and regular teachers involved with the student. Regularly scheduled parent conferences by the regular classroom teacher should include the pupil's primary special education teacher.

8. Reported to the parents as a written progress report, as needed, along with a standard grade. Parents will receive complete grading procedures and performance results upon their written or verbal requests if not already included on the IEP. Also, parents may receive informal progress reports of their student's school performance by mutual arrangements between parents and the student's teachers.

9. Reported in specific cases, where a pupil's handicap interferes with learning and performance, using a multicategory grading system (not pass-fail). A combination of both criterion-referenced and self-referenced methods could be used. Mildly handicapped students capable of achieving within the regular classroom or school grading system should not have a modified reporting system until the handicapped condition warrants alternative grading.

10. Reported with judgments about effort, attitude, and similar factors being separated in the grading process. Unsubstantiated opinions, difficult to support, should be replaced with realistic objectives. Progress should be measured toward completion of an objective. Grading criteria must be based on objective measures of accomplishment.

Handicapped Grading Strategies

Grading issues, philosophical considerations, general grading practices, grading process elements, handicapping factors, and general grading recommendations have been covered in this paper. How and when is the determination made that a student's handicapping condition will require alternative grading? What steps should be taken in adjusting the curriculum and by whom?

Before a student is fully mainstreamed or after a student has been identified as handicapped, the available classes and current schedule should be closely examined by the IEP team. The IEP team should make the determination as to whether the student should recieve reduced assignments and alternative grading and what schedule changes should occur, if any, due to the handicapping condition. The degree of mainstreaming and assistance should be clearly spelled out in the individual educational plan. Any grading plan selected should be outlined in the IEP. Every teacher responsible for a course or subject that the individual student will attend should recieve a copy of the IEP, grading system, curriculum modifications needed, and special education assistance available to help carry out the plan.

Grading Process Questions

Arriving at a grading plan and curriculum modifications should require the following process questions that can be undertaken by the IEP team. Not all mainstreamed handicapped students will reguire alternative grading.

1. What area does the student's handicapping condition fall within, the physical, cognitive, emotional, or sensory category? How will the handicapping condition effect regular classroom work? (See Table 2)

2. Is the handicap severe enough to reguire curriculum modifications and alternative grading? (See Table 1)

3. If the answer to question #2 is "no", what recommendations should be communicated to regular staff, parents and the student to assist in regular class work? How will the assistance strategies be listed on the IEP and what additional materials are required?

4. If the answer to question #2 is "yes", what kind of modifications will be needed in each mainstreamed class? (See Table 2) What kind of grading procedure or modification to the school's standard grading plan is needed? (See Figure 3)

5. Who will provide the regular teaching staff assistance in curriculum modification and alternative methods of assessing student progress? (See Table 3) What specialized materials will be needed to modify the curriculum and provide alternative grading for the handicapped pupil?

6. Who will monitor the student's progress and assist in grading modifications and record keeping?

7. Will transcript and report card notation be required to show reduced assignments and alternative grading?

8. Will a regular class grade equivalent be used as well as a special education grade?

9. Will a student grade contract be useful in helping staff determine grading objectives? (See Figure 2) What does the student feel and think about curriculum and grading modifications, does he or she have suggestions?

10. Who will communicate with parents and other school staff concerning the handicapped student's progress? What lines of communication need to be established and with whom?

Discussion

Every teacher is responsible for some system of grading. This responsibility, authorized by the local school district, may not be delegated to students, aides, or other support personnel. The student evaluation and grade assignment are the duties of the teacher assigned to a specific content area or classroom.

When called for, personalizing instruction (Fantini, 1980) and individualizing requirements for special education students are recommended. Adjustments designated as "alternative assignment" must be communicated to the student, the special education teachers, administrators, and the parents. This phrase should accompany every standard grade assignment. The regular education teacher, who has adjusted more than half of a unit of study for a handicapped student, should also use the phrase "reduced requirements" in reports to parents, special education personnel and other teachers.

Recognizing the unique individual differences and often debilitating problems of the handicapped student, the teacher must occasionally use alternative means to measure learning. The standard practice of using printed tests requiring written responses is not always adequate. Other forms of measurement testing are included in Table 3.

Only in the most extreme cases should a student fail a given content area or subject. If appropriate personnel and responsible school authorities identify and intervene early, many failures may be

circumvented and corrected, thus helping the student maintain self-respect and personal integrity (Kiraly & Bedell, 1984).

Grades which indicate performance compared to others are probably not meaningful where handicapped pupils are concerned, but may be justified for program evaluation purposes if the handicaps are noted. More than a two-level system of grading (pass-fail) should be used because pass-fail systems place a difficult burden on eductors and handicapped pupils. The educational goals of motivation and promotion of human dignity seem to prohibit such a neutral-negative method of marking. A method using more levels is likely to be more valid and reliable (Carpenter, 1985).

Morse and Lorsch (1970) indicate that all individuals have a basic need "to achieve a sense of competence." Teachers can use grades to assist this growth in competency. If there are problems, there are also channels of support available, such as special education teachers, consultants, supervisors, building principals and directors of special education (Howe, 1980).

Grades for alternative assignments or grades based on reduced requirements should also be accompanied by a grade that would indicate the student's placement within the regular class or a class equivalency grade. When as clear a picture as possible is reported, each student's achievements are communicated to parents, school personnel, employers, and continuing education institutions; the educational organization's integrity can remain intact if that is a major concern.

Summary

Giving the handicapped another type of handicap--a grading policy--attempts to fill a void in the practice of education today. Identifying the uses of grading alerts the educator to broader perspectives than the narrow focus of grading for measuring student learning (Kiraly & Bedell, 1984).

In order to grade mainstreamed handicapped pupils fairly and without ambiguities, a fair and clear grading system for all pupils must be operating. If the basic system lacks merit, adjustments for handicapped pupils will suffer the same problem. Particularly where secondary students are concerned, educators must be vigilant so that the messages that are sent are clear, accurate, and meaningful (Carpenter, 1985).

Grading handicapped pupils, although troublesome, raises long-standing issues. All teachers, with or without mainstreamed handicapped students, are charged with pupils of different abilities. The teacher's mission is to adequately communicate an intended message or messages to the student and other grade consumers about performance in a given time period. Success in fulfilling the grading mission is dependent upon teachers' understanding of all the issues involved (Carpenter, Grantham, & Hardister, 1983).

FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1. Matrix of Grading Messages and Receivers.

MESSAGES	RECEIVERS			
	Students	Parents	Teachers/Principals other school Personnel	Post/secondary schools/Employers
Competence				
Progress				
Attitude				
Effort				
Work Habits				
Comparison with others				

It is doubtful that any one symbol can communicate the intended message of the grader when a variety of purposes are possible. The above matrix illustrates the complexity of the problem. The problem might be drastically reduced if each group perceived grades in the same way. However, grades carry different messages depending on the receiver's need.

(Carpenter, Grantham, & Hardister, 1983)

Figure 2. Sample grading contract.

I, (student's name), agree to complete the following objectives and activities by (date).

1.

2.

3.

4.

(student signature) (date)

I, (teacher's name), agree to award a grade of _____ upon completion of all objectives and activities listed above, if completed by (date).

(teacher's signature) (date)

Monitoring System

	Date Started	Date Completed	Teacher Initial
Objective 1			
Activity 1.1			
Activity 1.2			
Objective 2			
Activity 2.1			
Activity 2.2			

Student Grade Contract

(Vasa, Steckelberg & Asselin, 1981)

Figure 3. A multicategory system of grading mainstreamed handicapped students.

_____ Student's Name _____

_____ Teacher's Name 9-week period

CRITERIA FOR RESOURCE ROOM STUDENTS

GROUP I Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ave.
Pays attention in class	C	C	B	C	D	C	B	B	B	6
Participation	B	C	A	C	C	B	C	C	C	6
Tries to do his best (effort)	B	A	A	C	A	B	A	C	C	8
Comes to class on time	B	A	A	A	B	A	A	B	A	10
Follows directions	C	C	D	C	C	B	C	C	C	5
Cooperates	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	B	B	6
Group I total points										41
GROUP II										
Completes assignments	C	C	B	D	C	D	C	B	C	5
Assignments turned in on time	B	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	6
Prepared for class	C	B	C	C	C	B	B	C	C	6
Average of work assignments	D-	F	D	F	F	F	D-	F	D-	1
Group II total points										18
GROUP III										
Takes standard test	F		D-		F		F		D-	0
Standard test plus corrections	B+		B-		C+		B		B-	7
Retakes specially made test	D+		C+		C		D+		C-	4
Group III total points										11

Total points for groups I, II, III	70
Average of groups I, II, III	5.4
Grade Equivalent	C

A-almost all of the time
B-majority of the time
C-1/2 of the time
D-seldom
F-never

A+ = 12	C = 5
A = 11	C- = 4
A- = 10	D+ = 3
B+ = 9	D = 2
B = 8	D- = 1
B- = 7	F = 0
C+ = 6	

A sample multicategory grading system for mainstreamed resource room students. This system can be utilized with almost any teacher and subject. A very fair and objective way to measure growth for any mainstreamed handicapped student.

(Street, 1979)

Table 1. A Summary of Grading Suggestions Related to Individual Learners in Available Literature

Standards		Vehicles	Logistics
Base grades on individual progress (Cohen, 1983; Frierson, 1975; Horowitz, 1982; Turnbull & Schulz, 1979; Turnbull, Strickland, & Brantley, 1982; Wiederholt, Hammill, & Brown, 1978).	Base grade on a modified curriculum (Drucker & Hansen, 1982).	Use a pass-fail system (Lieberman, 1982).	Grade daily (Berger, 1981; Cohen, 1983; Mosier & Park, 1979; Wiederholt, Hammill, & Brown, 1978).
Use (IEP) objectives as the basis for grades (Cohen, 1983; Frierson, 1975).	Weight grades based on the difficulty of class or assignments (Bippus, 1981; Terwilliger, 1977).	Use an inventory checklist denoting mastery or nonmastery (Frierson, 1975; Gronlund, 1981).	Involve students in grading (Frierson, 1975; Lindsey, Burns, & Guthrie, 1984; Slavin, 1980).
Use lowered grading standards (Drucker & Hansen, 1982).	Use a self-referenced system of grading (Cohen, 1983).	Provide a narrative written report (Cohen, 1983; Frierson, 1975; Horowitz, 1982; Kohl, 1982; Lieberman, 1982).	Cooperate with regular teachers to grade handicapped students, (Aloia, 1983; Cohen, 1983; Davis, 1982; Horowitz, 1982; Lindsey, Burns, & Guthrie, 1984).
Grade process and product separately (Frierson, 1975; Horowitz, 1982).	Compare grade to past weekly performance (Frierson, 1975; Lieberman, 1982; Slavin, 1980; Zoboroski, 1981).	Employ a token economy (Frierson, 1975; Marsh & Price, 1980).	State individualized grading plan in the IEP (Drucker & Hansen, 1982).
Base grades on ability (Frierson, 1975; Horowitz, 1982; Turnbull & Schulz, 1979).	Consider effort when competence or progress is unsatisfactory (Lindsey, Burns, & Guthrie, 1984).	Use a combination of correction and scores (Cohen, 1983; Horowitz, 1982).	Conduct parent-teacher conferences to report grade (Gronlund, 1981; Kohl, 1982).
Contract with students for grades based on task completion (Frierson, 1975; Horowitz, 1982; Lieberman, 1982).		Employ "no progress" grades (Frierson, 1975).	
		Use a "pass/no grade" system where mastery learning is employed (Gronlund, 1981; Kirschenbaum, Napier, & Simon, 1971).	
		Use a multiple-marking system for a variety of purposes (Gronlund, 1981; Kirschenbaum, Napier, & Simon, 1971).	

(Carpenter, 1985)

TABLE 2.

A Decision Making Model for Modification

PHYSICAL

GRADING PROCESS ELEMENTS	REGULAR TEACHER MODIFICATIONS	SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER MODIFICATIONS	ADMINISTRATOR MODIFICATIONS
Measurement:	Vary test construction to reduce requirement for written response, e.g., use multiple choice test, true/false test, completion tests	Review test construction and provide suggestions for modifications based on the handicap and/or its limitations	Provide listing of suggested modifications that have been successfully used by regular teacher
Performance Criteria:	Adjust performance criteria based on mastery skills levels of handicapped student	Review established performance criteria and make suggestions for adjustments	Monitor modifications to assure compliance with school district
Grading Decision:	Consultation with special education teacher to identify student's limitations and determine criterion referenced criteria	Consultation with regular teacher to discuss overall achievement, impact of handicap on performance	Participate in regular/special education teacher conferences
Grading Symbols:	Use combination grading symbol system to indicate achievement and degree of effort put forth	Identify and rank mainstream student's effort as part of overall achievement	Provide regular teacher with feedback on the appropriateness of modifications and their congruency with school district policy
Reporting System:	Use report card; interim progress reports.	Participate in regular teacher/ student conference to assure clarity of information.	Review modifications in reporting system to assure compliance with school district policy.

COGNITIVE

GRADING PROCESS ELEMENTS	REGULAR TEACHER MODIFICATIONS	SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER MODIFICATIONS	ADMINISTRATOR MODIFICATIONS
Measurement:	Use fewer test items; vary test construction to reduce requirement for written response, e.g., true/false tests	Review test construction and provide suggestions for modifications based on student's language skills level	Require regular teacher to document modification data and results of use
Performance Criteria:	Use competency checklist, e.g., develop list of mastered skills to observe progress and learning	Provide regular teacher with information about mainstream student's competencies, motivational techniques	Provide framework for the establishment of performance scale appropriate for student
Grading Decision:	Consult with special education teacher for input on grade assignments	Consult with regular education teacher to discuss overall achievement and performance limitations	Participate in regular/special education teacher conferences
Grading Symbols:	Use combination grading symbol system to indicate achievement performance/ degree of effort (B/1)	Assist regular teacher develop grading symbol equivalency modification scale to indicate performance/degree of effort	Authorize/approve the redefining of use of combination grading symbol system that will provide a more comprehensive report of achievement/ learning and effort
Reporting System:	Use written communication, e.g., letters to parent, progress reports, report cards.	Participate in parent/regular teacher conferences to assure clarity of information.	Participate in parent/regular/ special education conferences.

(Butler, Magliocca, Torres, & Lee, 1984)

TABLE 2. (cont.)

EMOTIONAL

GRADING PROCESS ELEMENTS	REGULAR TEACHER MODIFICATIONS	SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER MODIFICATIONS	ADMINISTRATOR MODIFICATIONS
Measurement:	Use fewer test items; ask tutor/ resource teacher to administer test to mainstream student	Administer test to mainstream student; review test construction and provide suggestions for modifications based on handicap, abilities, and limitations	Require regular teacher to document modification data and results of use
Performance Criteria:	Consult with special education teacher to determine criterion referenced criteria for modifications	Provide regular teacher with feedback for adjusting established performance criteria to accommodate student's needs	Provide framework for the establishment of performance scale appropriate for student
Grading Decision:	Consult with special education teacher to determine grade assignment	Consult with regular teacher to discuss overall achievement, performance, and limitation considerations for grade assignment	Participate in regular/special education teacher conferences
Grading Symbols:	Use combination grading system to indicate achievement performance and effort (B/1)	Assist regular teacher in the development of a grading symbol equivalency modification to indicate level of achievement/effort	Provide feedback to regular teacher on the appropriateness of modifications and their congruency with school district policy
Reporting System:	Use midterm grades/progress reports, parent conferences, report cards.	Participate in parent/regular teacher conferences to assure clairty of information.	Participate in parent/teacher conference.

SENSORY

GRADING PROCESS ELEMENTS	REGULAR TEACHER MODIFICATIONS	SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER MODIFICATIONS	ADMINISTRATOR MODIFICATIONS
Measurement:	Ask tutor/resource teacher to administer to mainstream student having visual/auditory limitations	Administer tests to mainstream student, e.g., using sign; read test items to	Review regular teacher's modifications of test administration procedures
Performance Criteria:	Adjust performance criteria based on mastery skills level(s) of mainstream student	Provide regular teacher with information about mainstream student, e.g., competencies, impact of limitations; make make suggestions for modifications	Provide framework for the establishment of a performance criteria scale appropriate for mainstream student
Grading Decision:	Develop contractual agreement with student, grade assignment based on completion of IEP goals and objectives based on mainstream student's competencies, limitations	Consult with regular teacher to discuss appropriateness of contractual agreement	Participate in regular/special education teacher conference
Grading Symbols:	Use combination grading symbol system to indicate achievement performance/ effort/at grade level	Assist regular teacher in the development of a grading symbol equivalency modification scale	Provide regular teacher with feedback on the appropriateness of modifications and their congruency with school district policy
Reporting System:	Use multiple reporting system to indicate achievement level qualitatively/quantitatively and comments to describe performance; report cards.	Participate in parent/regular teacher/student conferences to assure clarity of information.	Participate in parent/regular/ special education conferences.

TABLE 3

Alternative Methods of Assessing Student Progress

Types of Modification	Procedures
Verbal tests	Administer test verbally by the teacher, paraprofessional, peer, or others to permit student to complete similar requirements.
Shortened test	Reduce the number of test items on a scale to permit additional time or remove items which require more abstract reasoning or have a high difficulty level.
Levels of questions	Use different levels of questions for different students--similar to shortened test, but the items are written at a more concrete level.
Frequency of tests	Utilize short written or verbal measures given on a frequent basis--daily or weekly--to assess student progress. This allows for more feedback on student progress.
Length of time for completion	Increase the amount of time a student has to complete the measure to allow for slower writing, reading, and comprehension. This is important with many students.
Type of responses	Provide for short answer or simple marking of correct response by the student. Measures should be matched to students' response strengths.
Verbal review of literature	Substitute verbal review of literature for testing. Have student review the course or unit content with teacher, paraprofessional, peer, or resource teacher. This permits the student to present what he or she has learned and does not require that the student be limited to test items.
Peer tutoring	Include peer tutoring for teaching and testing purposes. Permits student to learn from peers, who often present materials more clearly than the teacher. Does need to be monitored and the peer tutor should receive some basic training.

(Vasa, Steckelberg, & Asselin, 1981)

Table 3 (cont.)

Types of Modification	Procedures
Development of instructional packet	Have student develop a packet of materials to show knowledge and understanding of content of the unit. This shows what the student believes is important.
Checklists	Use developmental checklists to permit the observation of student learning in a sequential and organized way that shows student progress. Checklists are good in academic-content courses and vocational courses. They permit the teacher to limit the number of formal tests.
Class interaction	Assess student participation in discussion which indicates student mastery of content.
Course projects	Measure progress towards final course product. In vocational classes, the standards may need to be altered when making comparisons with other students.
Performance	Assign the student a task to complete that requires specific skills you wish to measure. Evaluate the student's performance by observation or use of checklists.

TABLE 4

Uses of School Grades

I. As Measures of Learning

- Grades reflect a comparative measure of performance or competence in a subject (e.g., a final grade).
- Grades indicate achievement in a given unit or course of study (e.g., unit test, midterm exam).
- Grades show levels of accomplishment of educational objectives (e.g., Criterion of 80 percent mastery of Objective 3 = B grade).
- Grades reflect a measure of learning, e.g., quizzes, tests, exams, written work, or demonstration).

II. As a Means of Communication

- Grades report the status of a student's progress in a unit of study (e.g., A = Excellent, B = good, etc.).
- Grades indicate achievement levels to the student, teacher, parents, and administrators (e.g., 1 = outstanding, 2 = above average, 3 = average, etc.).
- Grades serve as records for the school's and district's reporting system (e.g., report cards, grade cards, student's file, cumulative record, etc.).

III. As Indicators for Educational Decisions

- Grades serve as recommendations for further study in a subject or course or unit (e.g., independent study work, honors class, etc.).
- Grades assign students to instructional groups (e.g., excellent readers, good readers, average readers, or poor readers).
- Grades determine pupil rewards, e.g., honors, club membership, etc.).
- Grades determine student eligibility for cocurricular activities (e.g., football, soccer, etc.).
- Grades affect advancement or retention (e.g., passing into next grade level, skipping a grade, being held back a grade, etc.).

IV. As Motivation

- Grades foster motivation to learn (e.g., working for an A, contracting for a B, etc.).
- Grades nurture competitiveness (e.g., maintaining a 4.0, being in the top 2 percent, etc.).
- Grades determine admission to further educational opportunities (e.g., college, special programs, unique training, etc.).
- Grades affect employment opportunities (e.g., types of jobs, levels of responsibilities, etc.).
- Grades earn support from sources of financial aid (e.g., grants, scholarships, loans, etc.).

V. As Abuses

- Grades create debilitating effects of failure (e.g., poor self-concepts, failure syndrome, dummy complex).
- Grades produce adverse emotional feelings (e.g., need for achievement, fear of failure, depression, cut-throat competitiveness).
- Grades encourage undesirable behavior (e.g., cheating, dishonesty, aggressiveness).
- Grades distort educational values (e.g., learning for grades).
- Grades do not actually communicate pupil progress.

(Kiraly & Bedell, 1984)

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